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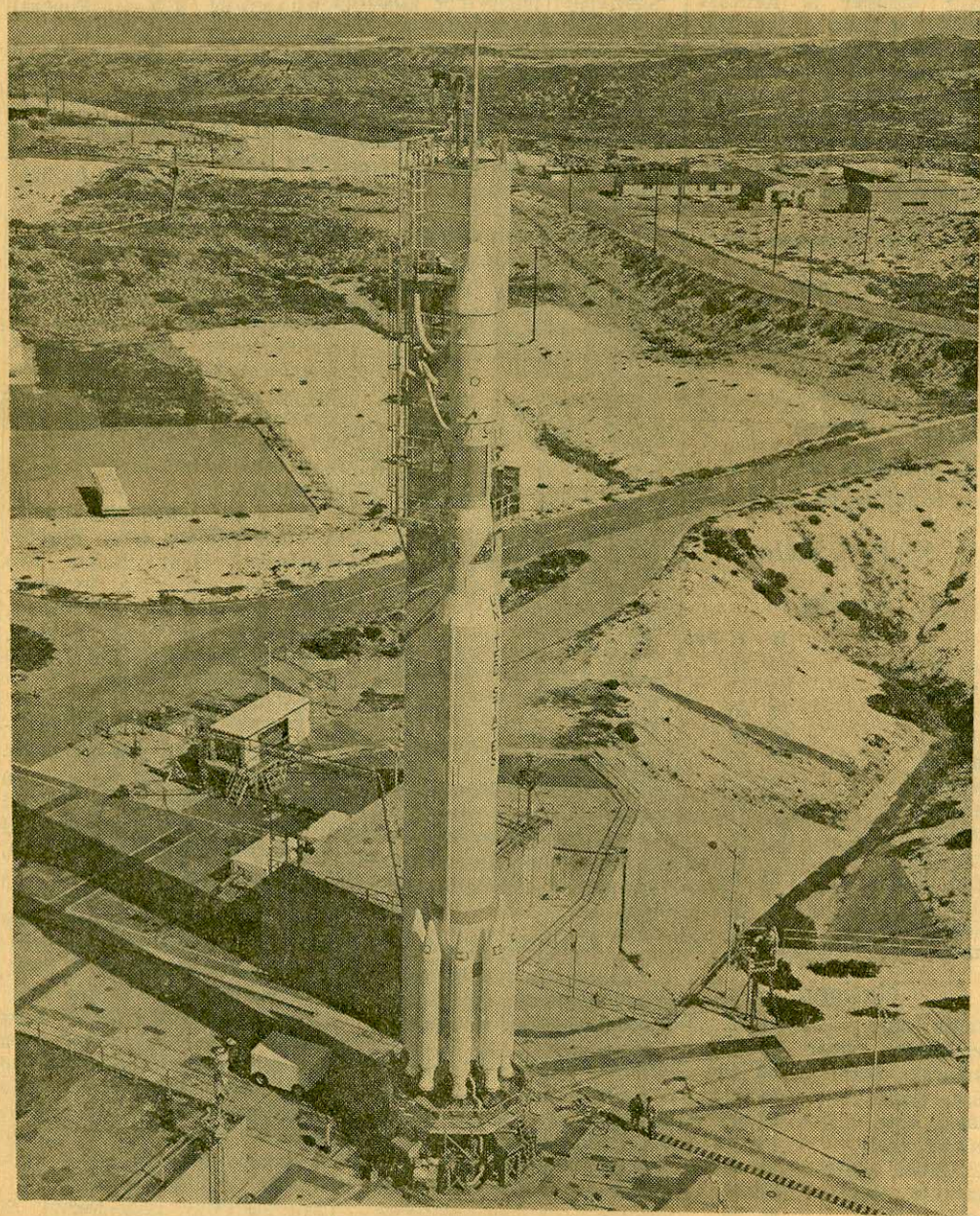

More than 500 persons viewed the launching of this ERTS rocket Sunday. The launch vehicle, standing approximately 110 feet, employs a unique extender designed to accomodate the Multi-Spectral Scanner subsystem (MSS) and antennas which extend below the adapter-vehicle in place of the normal attach fitting. Photographic data from the satellite will be relayed to and processed by the Sioux Falls EROS center.

Earth Resources Satellite In Perfect Orbit Over Poles

LOMPOC, Calif. (AP) — Their long-awaited satellite tucked in a perfect orbit over the North and South poles, scientists are checking out systems aboard the ERTS spacecraft in preparation for receiving first pictures of the earth Tuesday.

The $176 million spacecraft was launched Sunday from Vandenberg Air Force Base here to begin a year of global environmental measurements that scientists hope will usher in a new era of using space technology to monitor earth's natural resources.

Pictures taken by ERTS cameras are to be processed by the Earth Resources Observation Systems (EROS) facilities, Sioux Falls.

ERTS, which is short for Earth Resources Technology Satellite, thundered aloft atop a white Delta launch rocket that flawlessly boosted the 1,900-pound spacecraft 500 miles above the South Pole and into a circular orbit.

"Everything looks fine - in fact it looks excellent," said Dr. John Clark, director of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Goddard Spaceflight Center at Greenbelt, Md. The center will control ERTS during the year in which the 10-foot-long satellite will circle the earth every 103 minutes.

Equipped with three television cameras and a special radiation-sensing device, the spacecraft will photograph the entire globe every 18 days.

Scientists hope to use the pictures to monitor natural resources such as crops, forests, schools of fish, water supplies and grasslands.

They believe the pictures, taken through filters that measure radiation reflected from the planet, can help in mapping, spotting earthquake fault systems and locating mineral and oil deposits.

"This is probably the most important launch of an unmanned satellite NASA has ever made," Clark said. "This mission has more potential to bring direct benefits to the average man than perhaps anything we've done so far in the unmanned space program."

Flight controllers at Goddard plan to spend Monday and part of Tuesday checking spacecraft systems before the first pictures are taken later Tuesday. They will be made as the butterfly-shaped spacecraft sweeps southward across Canada's Maritime Provinces. In the next orbit, ERTS is expected to take pictures of a swath down the Missouri and Mississippi River valleys.